

Sadako

BRIAN K. VAUGHAN FIONA STAPLES

CHAPTER
TWENTY
ONE



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CHAPTER
TWENTY
ONE

Saga

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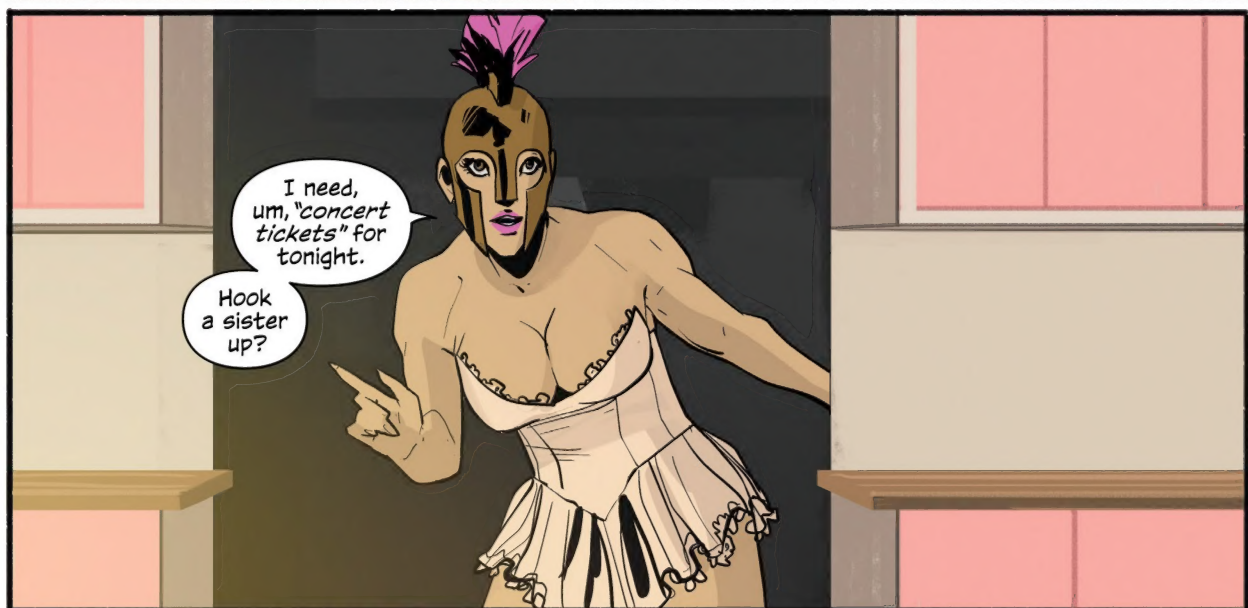
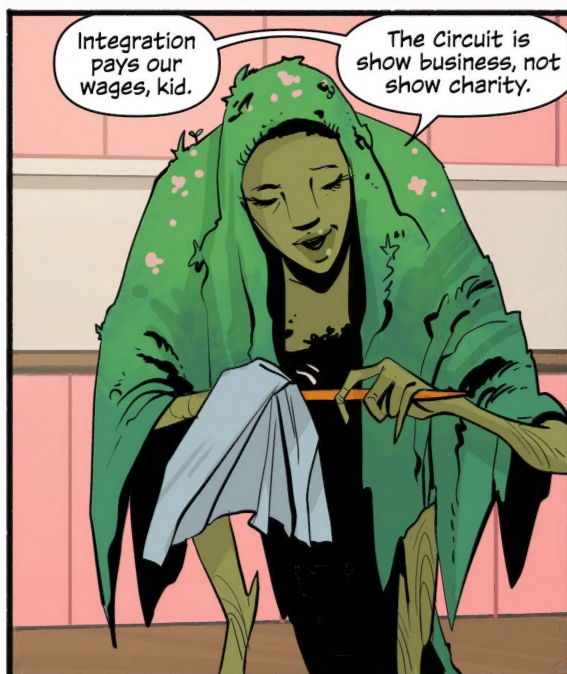
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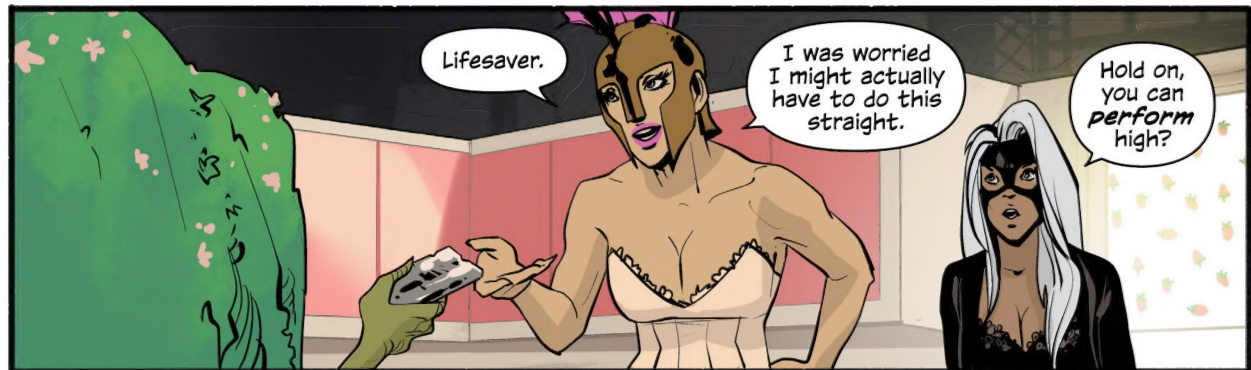
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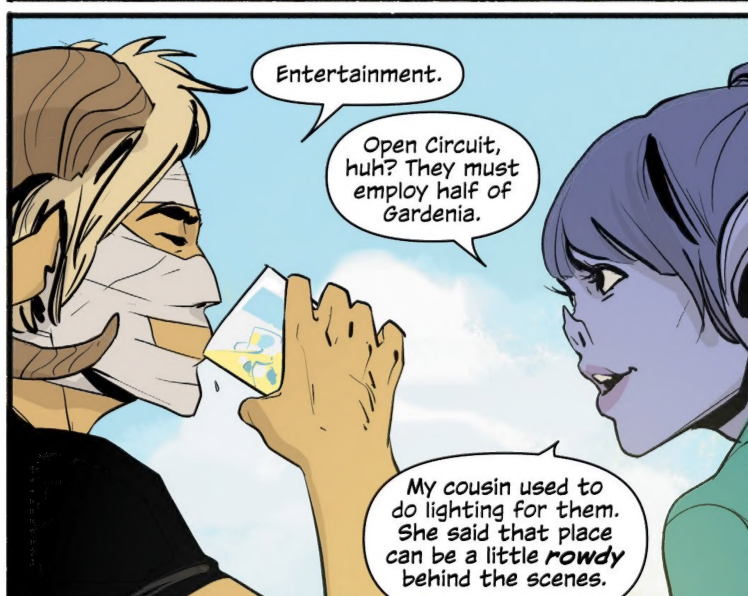
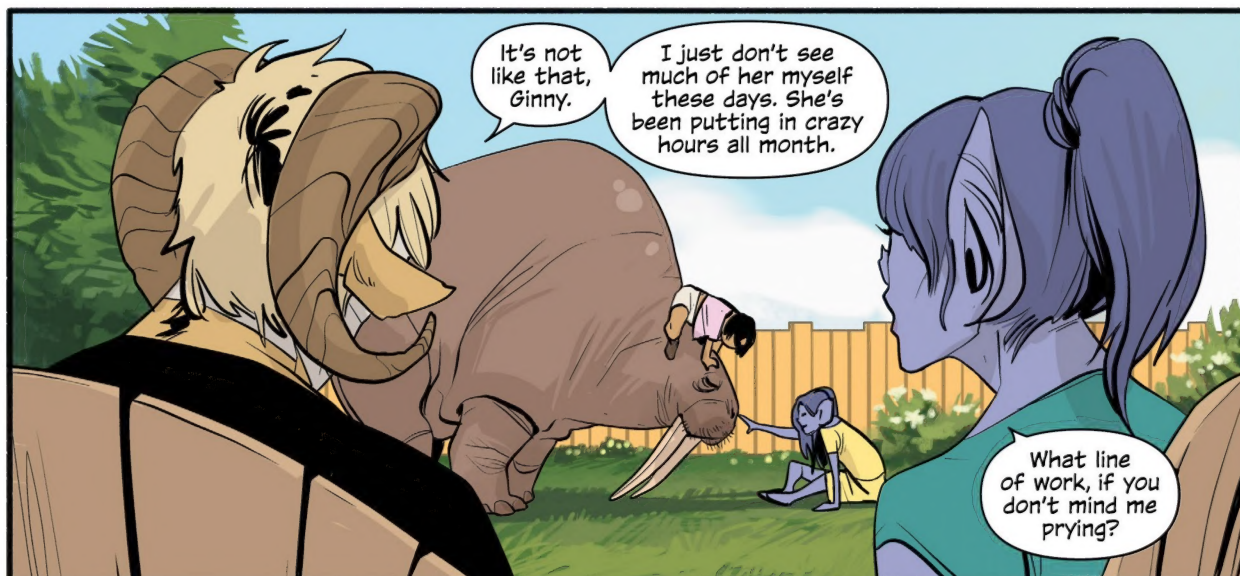
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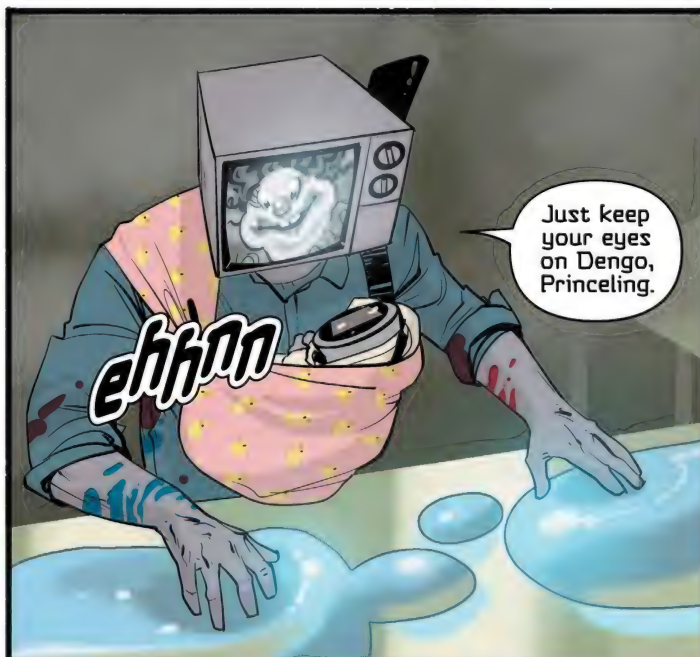


The trick is figuring out
which threats to deal
with first.

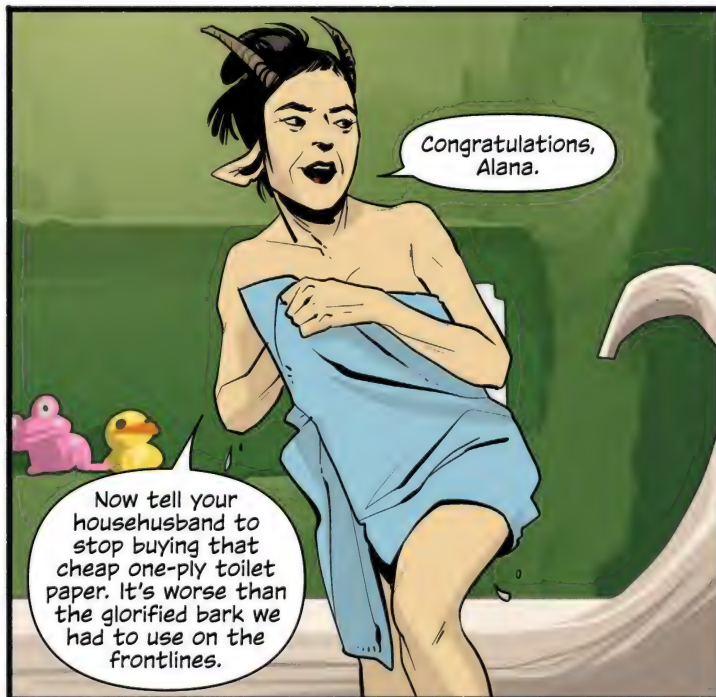




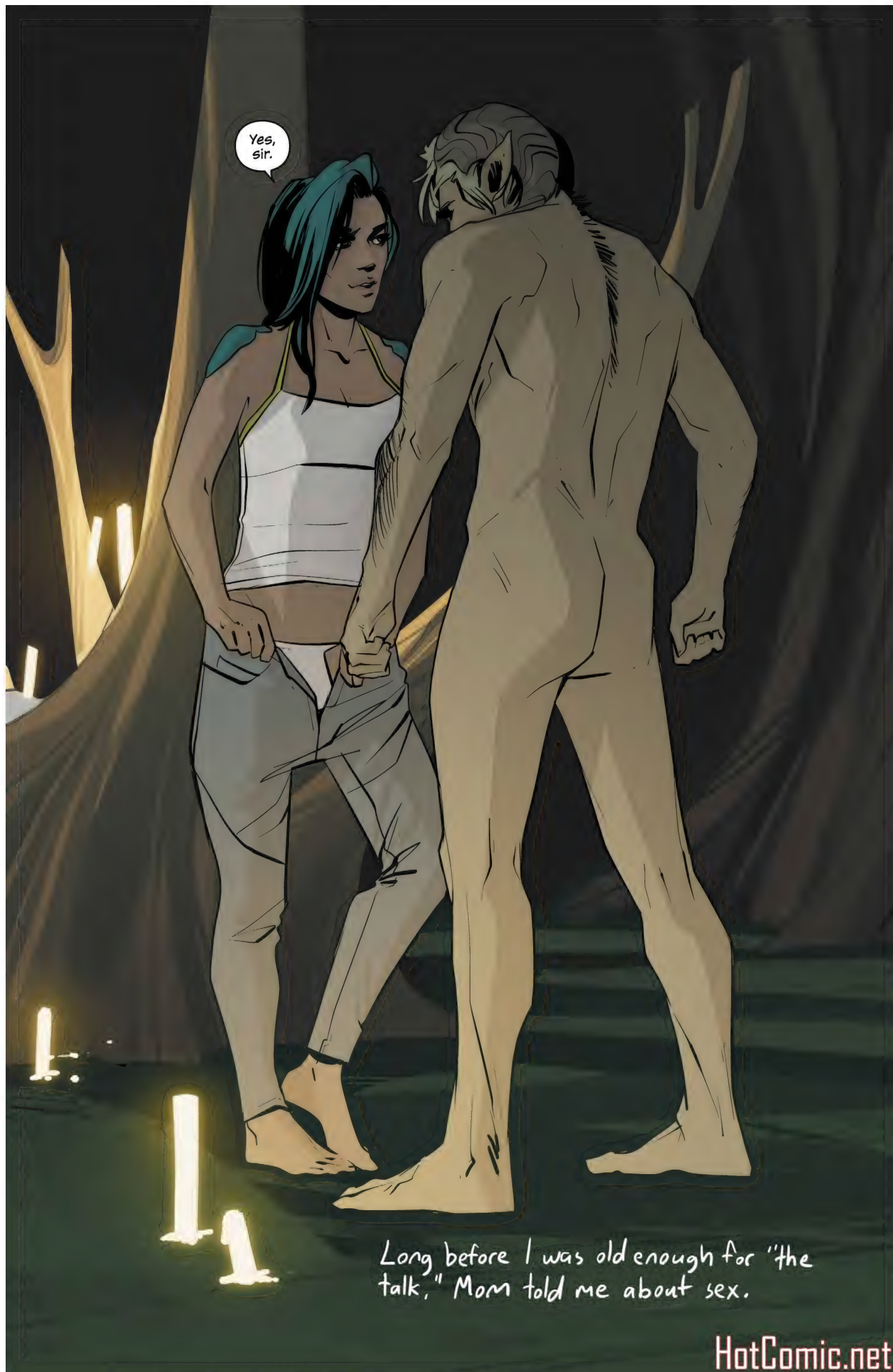












Long before I was old enough for "the talk," Mom told me about sex.

She said she'd had lots of it in her life, but married sex was probably her favorite.



Still, Mom also warned me not to expect fireworks like the ones in Mister Heist's romance novels every time.

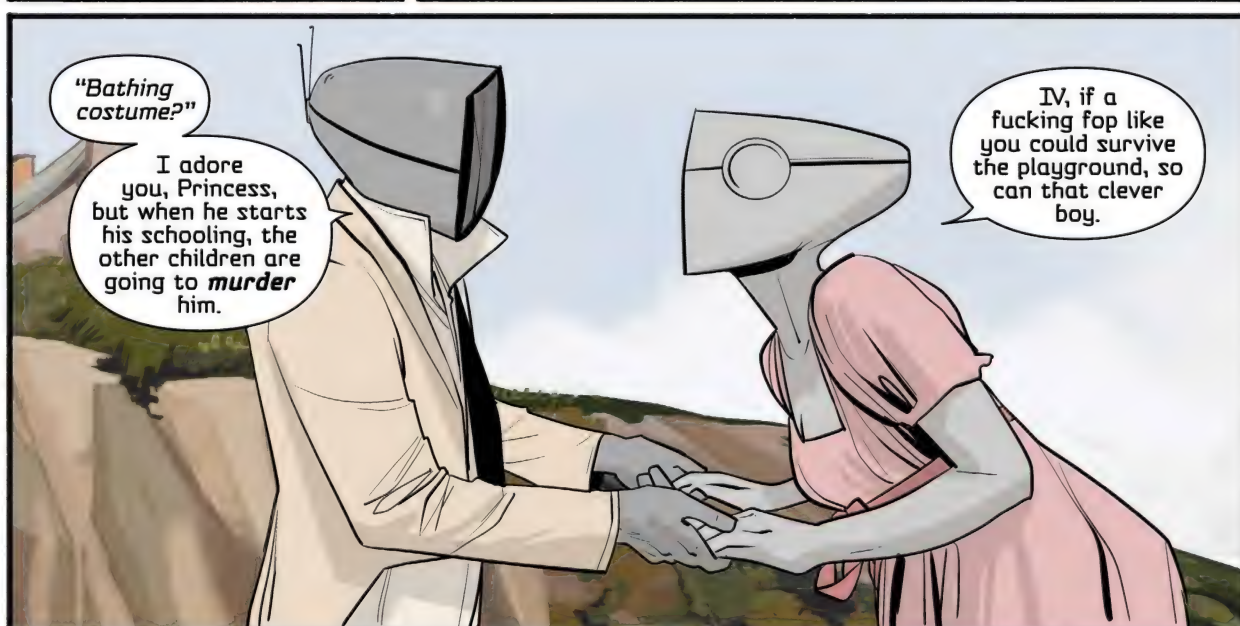
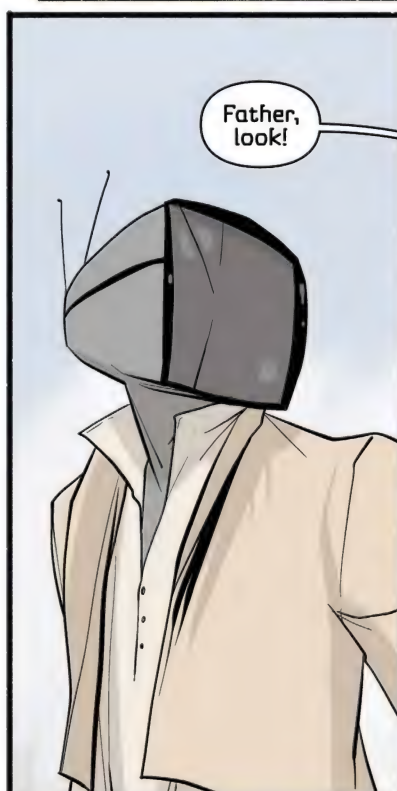


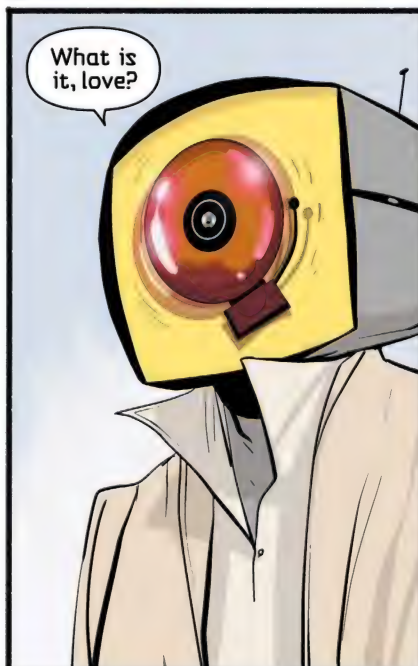
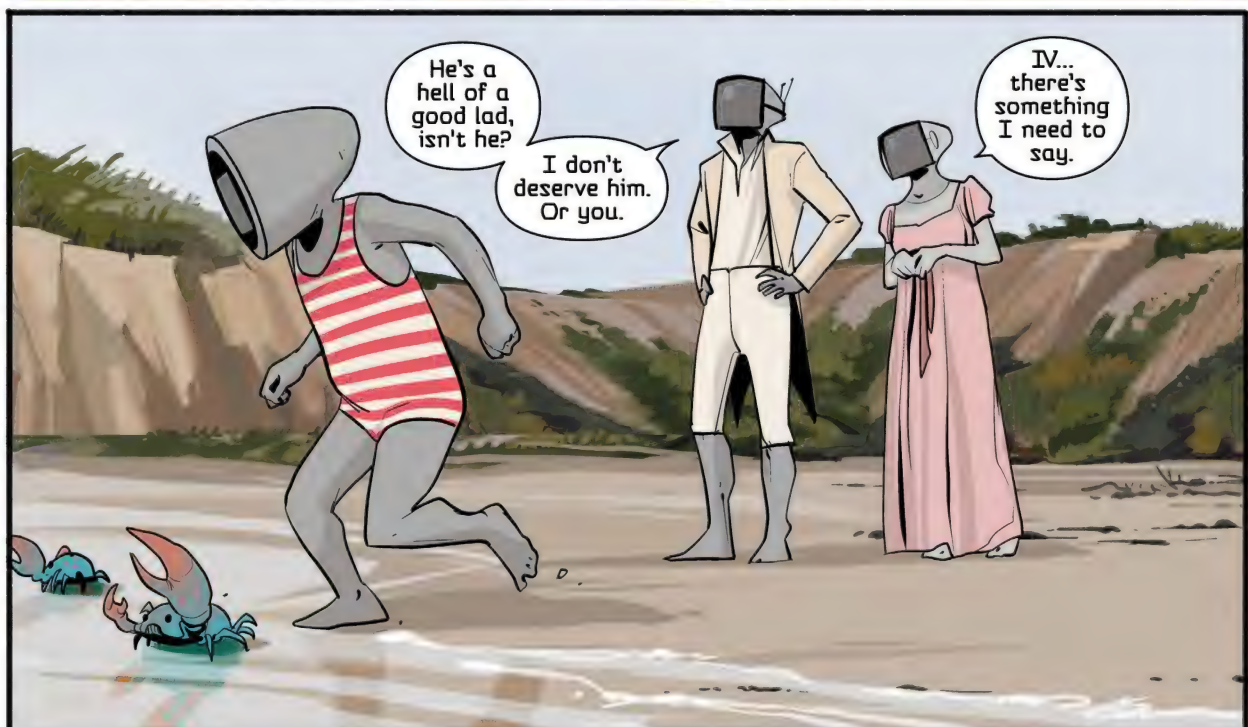
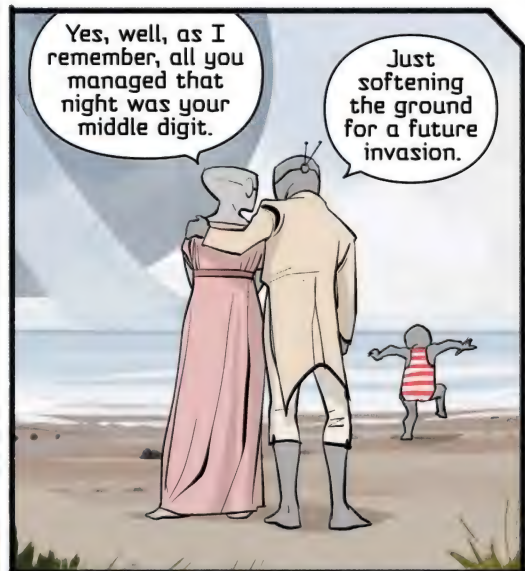
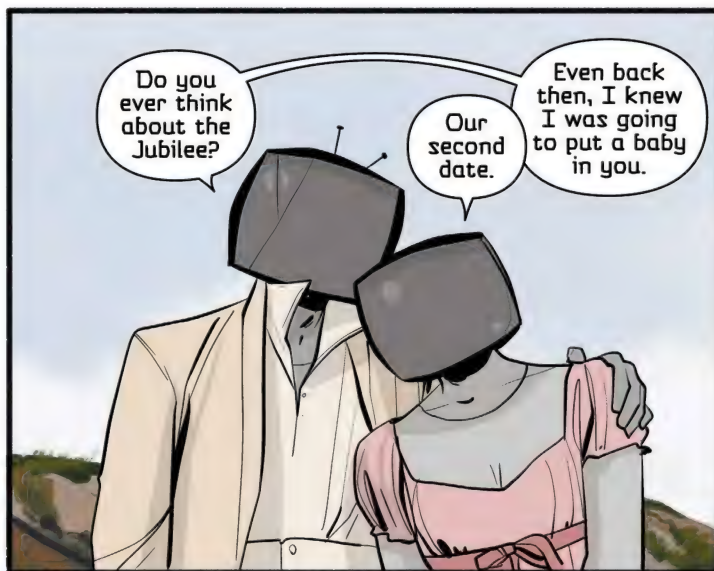
Some nights, even two old friends deciding to get as close as humanly possible...



... could still be worlds apart.

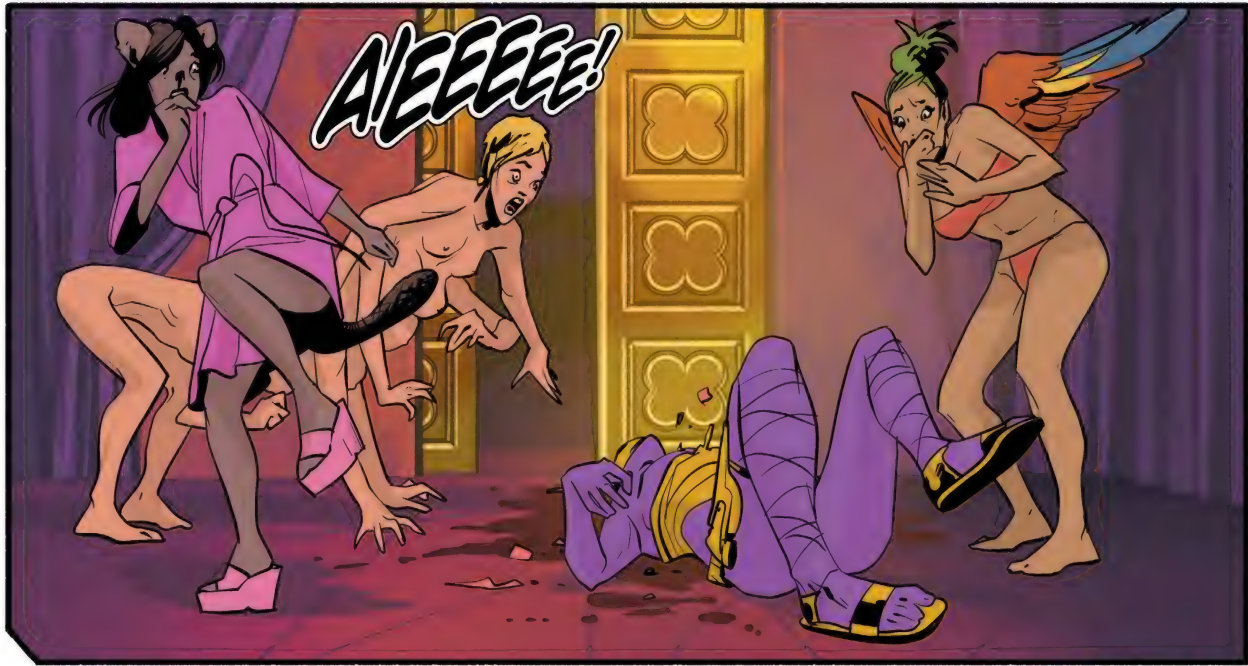




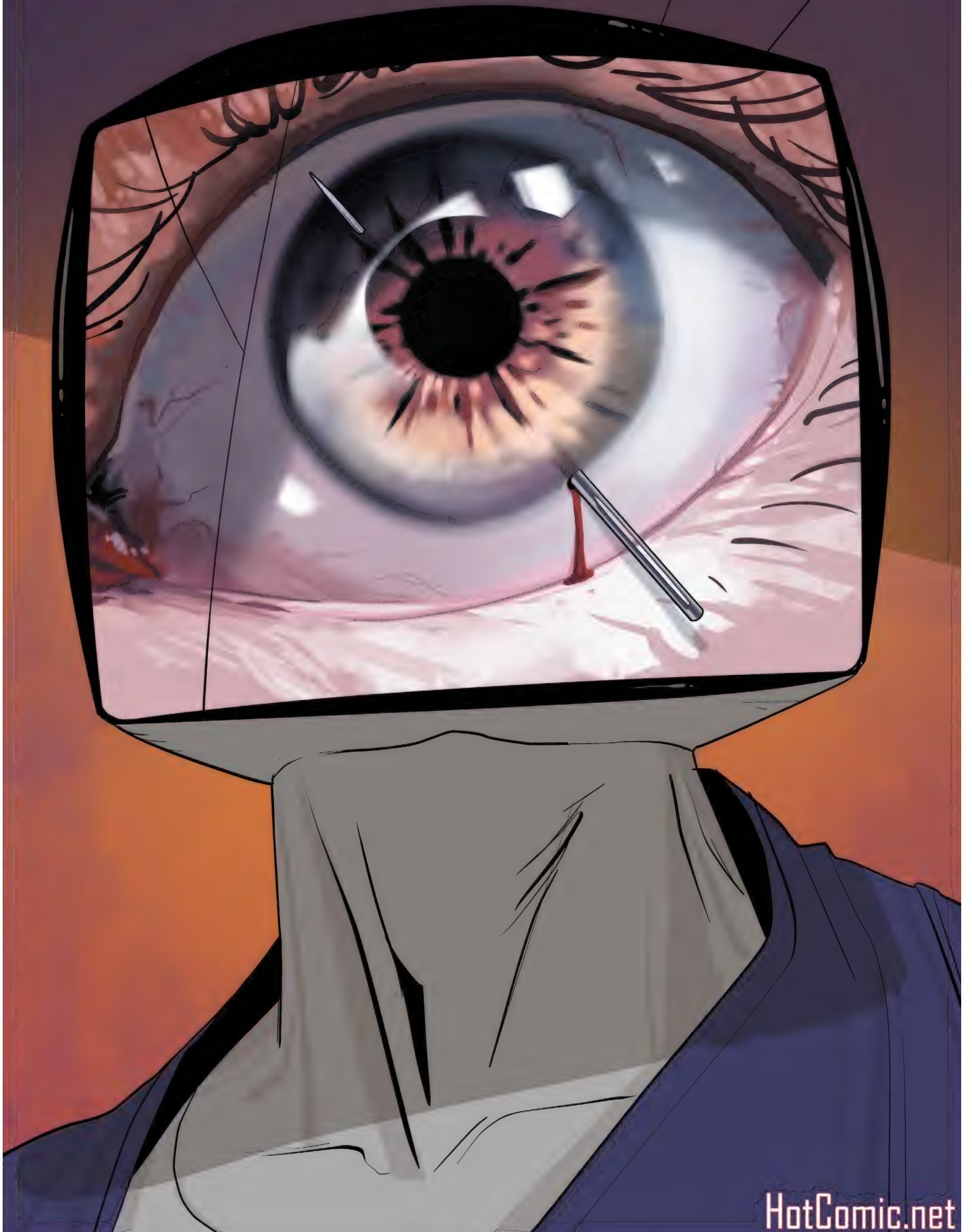








I have
to see King
Robot.



TO BE CONTINUED

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Believe it or not, I am writing this letter column from high above you, in an aeroplane. My fellow passengers seem perturbed by the nonstop clacking and dinging of my typewriter, but *To Be Continued* waits for no one.

I believe this issue is scheduled to hit stands just before the 2014 San Diego Comic-Con, where Fiona Staples and I both have spotlight panels on Friday. We'll also be together on Saturday for two different panels, one just about *Saga*, and another called "Strong Female Characters" that features a particularly cool lineup of creators. We'll be doing multiple signings all weekend, so be sure to check the Image Comics booth for times and locations. Excited to meet a few of you lovely folks. I'll be the sweaty bald white guy, so if you happen to see anyone matching that description on the convention floor, be sure to scream hello.

And hey, the **Second Ever Ill-Advised Saga Costume Contest** is officially underway, but many of you wrote in to ask what the deadline is, perhaps because I completely neglected to mention it. So let's say that all entries must be submitted no later than AUGUST 31, 2014 (and if you're getting anywhere close to that date, I strongly recommend sending your photos electronically to SagaCostumeContest@gmail.com in lieu of our regular mailing address above, where all other letters about our book should still be sent, please).

Once again, the rules are pretty simple: use whatever materials you like to dress up as any character (or characters) featured in any moment of our series so far. Then, snap a good picture of yourself, and send it our way. And there's an excellent chance your photo will end up in these very pages, so don't enter unless you're ready to be seen by the dozens of readers worldwide who skim these back pages while on the shitter.

Never forget, one grand-prize winner somehow selected by my wiener dog Hamburger will receive:

FIVE HUNDRED U.S. DOLLARS (Not a typo, not an imaginary story!);

Your picture published in glorious color in an upcoming issue;

A one-of-a-kind sketch of YOU as your *Saga* character drawn by the world-renowned Fiona Staples;

And an original script for a one-page comic story somehow inspired by the winner, sloppily handwritten by me (Brian).

And here's a tip! We're already drowning in excellent entries featuring Marko and/or Alana circa Volume One, so aspiring costumers may want to consider alternatives.

Speaking of Hazel's mommy and daddy, let's see how everyone felt about that last page of Chapter Nineteen.

Dear Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples,

I will never forgive you if Hazel's parents do not end up happily ever after.

Sincerely,

Michael Terasaki

Fullerton, CA

Well, we're off to a great start!

Dear BKV & FS,

We here at Fantasiu greatly enjoy reading Saga! However, the last issue left us stunned and saddened. WTF? Seriously? We understand that all things must come to an end. But why would you go and do us like that? But it's okay – we're going to find a violinist and an Italian restaurant for them to have a romantic dinner. They will realize how much they love each other and get back together! We saw it in a movie once... don't worry, it'll work.

Love,

Paula, Meescha & Jenna

Fantasiu Comics and Games

Federal Way, WA

P.S. One of the crew, Meescha, is deathly afraid of walruses. Could you change it to a cat on the cover of Saga #22? She has to ring up a lot of them.

Uh-oh, and now people are even turning against poor Friendo? Yep, this lettercol is gonna be a rough one.

Dear Fiona and Brian,

I wanted to thank you for Saga. It is funny, fresh, and incredibly smart and well crafted. Which brings me to my point: thank you, Fiona, for giving comics readers something special in the artwork of Saga. While it is ethereal, epic and emotive, the love and respect you afford the female figure is refreshing—and a huge relief—to a critical fan. It is exhausting to read comics as a woman and see violence repeatedly done to almost all female characters by objectifying and sexualizing them.

There are no identical, lazy, hyper-sexualized female bodies in Saga; all are unique shapes and colours with distinct, emotive bodies and faces. They are still beautiful, enormously fun to look at, and fit perfectly into the diverse, colourful universe its female characters are so important to. Of course, this is symptomatic of the respect and dignity afforded all characters in Saga (part of the reason I feel so deeply for a television with PTSD). You two give the characters (and readers) what they deserve. Thank you!

Much love,

Miranda Alksnis

Toronto, Canada

P.S. IF ALANA AND MARKO BREAK UP I WILL CRY
PROBABLY HOW COULD YOU DO THIS???

Awesome, now even the complimentary letters end stained with tears. I'm gonna yank open this plane's emergency exit if we don't turn things around soon...

Dear Brian,

I don't know what to say about Saga #19. It's either really, really good or I'm missing something. Some of it reminds me of what my wife and I went through when we had our first baby girl 25 years ago.

My reaction to the story ranges from "Ho-Hum" to "Wow, this is balls-on accurate." Maybe I look for meaning in everything too much.

Anyway, maybe it is really, really good and I'm missing something too.

As always the art is fabulous.

I guess the main thing is that when struggles do come always remember to do a SKISH with all the people that you love and tell those people that you love that you love them.

Peace,

Mak Skem

Sanford, FL

"My reaction ranges from 'Ho-Hum' to 'Wow, this is balls-on accurate.'" — Mak Skem

Congrats, Mak, that blurb is definitely making it to the back of a future collection.

Dear Mr. Vaughan,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWwLxFlVX1s>

Sincerely,

Caleb A. Keller

Ames, IA

—sigh—

Dear BKV, Fiona & Team,

I'm only mostly dead after reading Chapter Nineteen. Once again Fiona's art astounds and enchants and the letters are so well done that I sometimes forget I'll be in for a severe shock when I read the actual words. I'm already counting the days until the next issue, though I'm sure I'm in for further heartbreak. I've never put pen to paper to write to a comics letter column before, though I've been reading Wonder Woman since I was 10. Despite the heartbreak I'll keep reading Saga if you keep making it—yes, even for 17 years, which isn't as long as WWW so maybe go for 27 years?

Maria Ludwig

Oakland, CA

Now we're talking.

Maria, thank you for committing to decades of support, despite our book destroying your heart. These other mooks have much to learn from your blind devotion.

Dear Saga,

Size doesn't matter as long as it's spherical. Where is Lying Cat when you need him?

As a science teacher, I am desperately trying to extinguish

the misconception that Pluto is a dwarf planet because of its size. I was heartbroken that Saga reinforced the misconception by calling Robot Kingdom a dwarf planet merely because of its limbo status between the size of a planet and moon. The International Astronomical Union (IAU) defines a dwarf planet as an object that has not cleared its orbital path, hence size doesn't matter.

However, next school year I plan on projecting this page of the comic as a bonus question to ask students to identify the fallacy. Thanks for helping me make learning fun.

For the record, Saga is brilliant which is why I nearly collapsed into despair upon reading issue 19. No hard feelings.

Felicia

Las Vegas, NV

Thanks so much for the very educational letter, Felicia! I'm seriously jealous I never had a science teacher who was cool enough to project filthy space comics in class.

And while you're absolutely correct about the IAU's definition for a dwarf planet, the Interstellar Astronomical Coalition of Landfall defines a dwarf planet as:

A celestial body, regardless of orbital path, that is too small to be a true planet, but too large to be classified as a moon;

The filthy homeworld of stinking dwarves.

Also, Lying Cat is a her. But no hard feelings.

Dear Fiona and Brian,

I'm a relatively new uncle and, so long as I'm able to dodge the sheer terror of parenthood myself, I'm determined to wield as indelible a cultural influence over my five nephews (and come fall, finally, a niece!) as Mame did over young Patrick. Said ambition led me to notice something thus far absent from Hazel's extraordinary early life, aside from a babysitter who can actually hold her,* a place she can truly call home, any lasting freedom from mortal danger, etc. That thing is an appropriately bitching soundtrack. If the rocketship tree were somehow able to manifest a sort of biomechanical sound system, which earthbound bands/musicians/composers do you think Alana's and/or Marko's preferred tunes would most resemble? Or would it just be Klara belting out ancient battle hymns in Blue?

Cheering madly from my circuit helmet in Brooklyn,

Arthur K. Nguyen

Brooklyn, NY

*And please allow me to clarify that I meant NO insult whatsoever to Izabel by that comment about not being able to hold Hazel! I'd sacrifice at least one non-thumb digit to have my soul bonded with a spirit as smart, witty, and real as hers.

No offense taken by Izabel, Arthur. For someone who's incorporeal, she has very thick skin.

As for our heroes' favorite musicians, while there are few close analogs to our earthbound tunes in the Saga universe, at this point in their lives, I'm confident that Marko would be a big fan of Tchaikovsky, while Alana might be more likely to fade away to The XX.

Klara would listen exclusively to N.W.A.

Dear Brian K. Vaughan,

Congratulations on another fine volume of *Saga*. I feel that this is the best story arc yet. Fiona's art has really improved in the last six issues. I don't mean that she wasn't good in the beginning. I mean she was great at first, but now I feel she is not holding anything back in her art and she is really putting effort into making *Saga* the best looking comic book out there. She deserves every award that she has achieved over the last two years on *Saga*. Your writing is also very good. Since issue one I have been waiting for one of your great climax moments that I've seen you do in other comic book series. I've been paying close attention to your writing and have noticed that you have been able to write some pulse-pounding climax scenes in which the shit really hits the fan like in *Runaways* issue 17 and *Y: The Last Man* issue 31. These climaxes really change the direction of the story and leave me trembling for days. I have to admit I felt a little unsatisfied with the climaxes of volumes 1 & 2, but in volume 3 you delivered even though it was a slow buildup that gave us some really great character developing moments that really made me care. To be honest, when I read issue 12 I expected Oswald to die, but when he died in issue 17 I felt it was too soon and was in shock.

After you finished the climax, you wrapped everything up really nicely with *The Will* being visited by his sister *The Brand*. Who reminds me a lot of another character that you wrote during your run of *Swamp Thing*. I'm talking of course of Agent Romero with her trench coat and tie, short hair, and ruthlessness. Is she an early version of *The Brand* that you were testing out? Please don't have her kill everyone I love like Agent Romero did. Although the fact that she didn't kill Upsher and Doff makes me a bit optimistic that she may be a decent person, but I am expecting any moment now for her to start slitting throats.

Anyway, keep up the good work. I can't wait for issue 19 and the start of volume 4. Hey, also since Prince Robot has been on the fritz on *Quietus*, any chance that he may become drinking buddies with Sealguy? I think they'll make a great bromance. So anyway, until next time, bye.

Sincerely,

Christopher Kral

Rancho Cordova, CA

P.S. Speaking of *Swamp Thing*, what the fuck happened to Heather? Did her father kill her? What the hell? You really left that plot thread hanging, but I forgive you. That was before *Y: The Last Man* and when you starting writing good comics.

Thanks (?) for plugging my somewhat tolerated run of *Swamp Thing*, recently collected by Vertigo in two new trades. I was fortunate enough to work with some truly spectacular artists way too early in my career, so at least check out those collections for their work.

And no, Christopher, I think *The Brand* is pretty different from ol' Agent Romero, and not just because only one of them has a giant dog that shoots poison darts from its nostrils.

Hm, I wonder if we've seen the last of Sweet Boy...

Hello Will,

Get better soon. I like you.

Regards,

Kenneth G.

Bronx, NY

Hm, I wonder if we've seen the last of *The Will*...

Hi Brian,

I have good news and bad news. The good news is that I found the mysterious Christian Slater strangling show that's been haunting your every waking moment. It was part of a short-lived 1989 HBO anthology series called 'The Edge', and the segment in question is called 'The Professional Man.' It's apparently based on a David Goodis short story, and was adapted again for a Showtime anthology series in 1995 with Brendan Fraser in the lead role.

The bad news is that it's going to be tough to find. There is very little info on this series online, and the only mention I can find about it being available for viewing was at a UC Berkeley screening in 2008. It said the DVD they watched was "from [director] Nicholas Kazen," so he possibly supplied his own copy. He might be your best bet if you desire seeing Christian Slater strangle people again.

Saga's making the big bucks, right? Just pay Slater with your vast riches to reenact it all.

Max Szyz

Ottawa, Ontario

MAX SZYC OF OTTAWA, ONTARIO, YOU ARE MY SAVIOR.

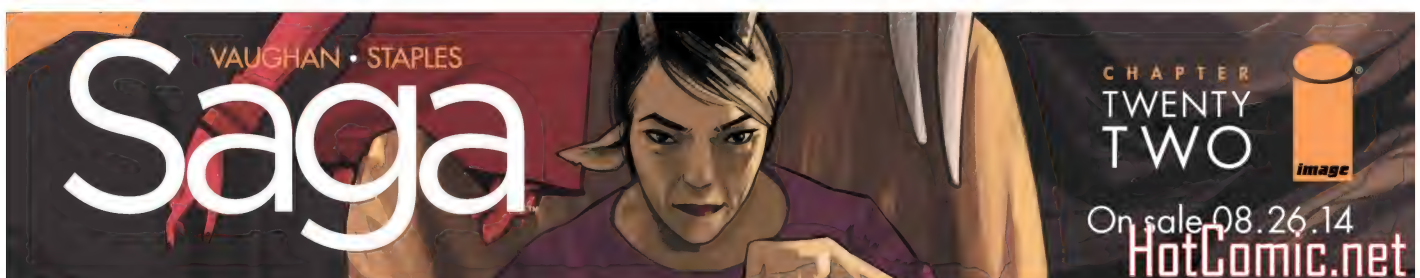
Singlehandedly transforming this column from a natural disaster into my favorite *To Be Continued* ever, Max has somehow done what an army of professional private investigators, the entire internet, and dozens of letter column skimmers could not: solve the last of the world's great mysteries. (And holy crow, Soderbergh directed that second adaptation!)

For your service to all humanity, to all forms of life really, Hamburger has quite obviously named YOU winner of this month's artifacts from the Almighty Prize Drawer: a signed copy of this very issue AND a copy of our rare "retailer variant" for Chapter Nineteen, an unopened CD of the Tiny Ruins' *Brightly Painted One* (I bought this New Zealand group's excellent album for Ball & Chain, but she'd already downloaded it herself), and an old ten-dollar note from Canada. You've earned it, my friend.

Okay, the flight attendant is demanding that I stow my Blickensderfer, but let's continue this conversation in thirty, as Fiona finally introduces us to His Royal Highness.

See you in San Dog,

Brian



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